



Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

Both males and females can experience sexual trauma during military service. Sexual trauma can lead to poor emotional and physical health. This fact sheet addresses MST and how the VA can help

What you need to know

Military sexual trauma (MST) includes both sexual harassment and sexual assault.

- **Sexual harassment** means unwanted sexual advances. It includes requests for sexual favors. It also includes verbal or physical comments, jokes, or gestures.
- **Sexual assault** means someone touching you or having sex with you when you didn't want them to. Other words for this are rape, sexual abuse, or sexual violence.

What are some symptoms an MST victim might experience?

It's important to know that MST is something that happened. It is not a diagnosis or condition. However, after experiencing MST, you may have the following:

- Bad memories, nightmares, or trouble sleeping
- Feeling unsafe and difficulty trusting others
- Feeling anxious, depressed, angry or withdrawn from friends and family
- Issues with drugs, alcohol, or dealing with anger
- Physical health issues

How can you begin to heal from MST?

It is important to remember that MST is not your fault. It may be hard to talk about what you went through. This is often the hardest step when seeking help. Talk to someone you trust. This can be a friend,

family member, clergy member, physician, or counselor. It's never too late to seek help.

What can the VA do to help?

The VA has programs to help you address the effects of MST. These services include counseling and treatment at no cost. They are free to any veteran who experienced MST during their military service. The VA covers all mental and physical health conditions related to MST. It is not necessary for the MST to be previously recorded in your medical record. You can receive help even if MST was never reported.

You do not need to be service connected to receive MST help.

Who can you contact for help at VA?

Every VA facility has an MST Coordinator who can help you find access to VA services and programs. They can connect you with a suitable counselor. The MST Coordinator for the VA Caribbean Healthcare System can be contacted at:

VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Social Work Service, D-227
10 Casia St. San Juan, Puerto Rico 00921-3201
Phone: (787) 641-7582 Ext: 12331
Toll Free: 1(800) 449-8729

You can also contact your local VA CBOC or Vet Center for help. Speak to your existing VA Healthcare Provider or local Vet Center

- St. Croix Vet Center: 340-778-5553
- St. Thomas Vet Center: 340-774-6674

The VA hotline for sexual trauma is: 1 (800) 827-1000

NOTE: If you are currently in a sexual trauma situation, please call 9-1-1 or contact your MST Coordinator right away.



REMEMBER...

Military Sexual Trauma [MST] includes both sexual harassment and sexual assault. Both males and females can experience MST. Talk to someone you trust. It is never too late to seek help for MST. The VA has programs to help you address the effects of MST. You do not need to be service connected to receive help.

Refer to the “Resources” section of this guide for your local Vet Center and VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics’ contact information

